

Hybrid Warfare Studies and Russia's Example in Crimea*

Hibrit Savaş Çalışmaları ve Kırım'daki Rusya Örneği

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Abstract

Although Hybrid Warfare is an old concept, theoretical studies in the western countries mainly began in the post-Col War era, focusing on asymmetrical threats against conventional superiority of western countries such as USA or Israel. September 11th attacks and 2006 Israel-Lebanon war played important roles for the evolution of hybrid warfare theories. However, there has not any consensus among scholars on a exact or unique definition of hybrid warfare.

Hybrid warfare became one of the main security issues for the West and especially for NATO after the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Russian military strategies, called "hybrid warfare" by the western countries, resulted in the successful annexation of Crimea and, caused a serious security problem for the West resulting important structural and functional changes for the military system of NATO. Russian activities, which have been based on surprise, ambiguity and deniability, presented a unique example for hybrid warfare studies.

Keywords: Hybrid Warfare, Russia, Crimea, Irregular Warfare, Asymmetric War.

Öz

Karma Savaş eski bir konsept olsa da batılı devletlerde bu konuya yönelik teorik çalışmalar esas olarak Soğuk Savaş sonrasında ABD ya da İsrail gibi Batılı devletlerin konvansiyonel üstünlüğüne yönelik asimetrik tehditleri esas alarak başlamıştır. 11 Eylül saldırıları ve 2006 İsrail-Hizbullah savaşı karma savaş teorilerinin gelişiminde önemli rol oynamıştır. Bununla birlikte akademisyenler arasında karma savaşın tanımı konusunda bir uzlaşma sağlanamamıştır.

Rusya-Ukrayna krizinin başlamasından sonra karma savaş batılı devletler özellikle de NATO için en önemli güvenlik sorunlarından biri haline gelmiştir. Batılı devletler tarafından "karma savaş" olara nitelendirilen Rus askeri stratejileri Kırım'ın başarılı bir şekilde ilhakı ile sonuçlanmış ve NATO'nun askeri sisteminde önemli yapısal ve işlevsel değişimlere yol açacak şekilde batılı devletler için çok önemli bir güvenlik sorunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Sürpriz, belirsizlik ve inkara dayalı Rus askeri faaliyetleri karma savaş açısından emsalsiz bir örnek teşkil etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karma Savaş, Rusya, Kırım, Gayrınizamî Harp, Asimetrik Savaş.

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Introduction

Over the recent years, interesting definitions and conceptualizations of conflict have emerged. John Robb's Open Source Warfare, General Rupert Smith's modern wars and Mary Kaldor's work on "new wars" are some of these conceptualization efforts on warfare issue. Despite these definitions had gained great criticism, military institutions had had seized upon new perspectives on warfare issue¹. Hybrid warfare has emerged as a new discussion area among the scholars.

Scholars working on hybrid warfare studies argue that hybrid warfare is not a new phenomenon, noting several historical battles that demonstrate the use of hybrid warfare strategies since ancient times. However, both use of the term and the study of hybrid warfare are new compared to the long history of warfare, with the September 11 attacks and the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war playing important roles in the evolution of hybrid threat studies, emphasizing in particular the asymmetrical dimension of the phenomenon.

Although hybrid warfare has become one of the most controversial issues among western countries, there has been no comprehensive and unique definition of the term, which has been shaped primarily by the authors of the relevant case studies. As McCulloh pointed out, the problem is the gap between the cognitive logic of definition and the uniqueness of each context in which hybrid warfare manifests itself. Therefore no definition adequately encompasses the multiple contexts that differ in time, space and logic.² Further complicating matters, Russian hybrid warfare has constituted yet another variant on the phenomenon.

Hybrid warfare became a core security issue with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the ongoing crisis in eastern Ukraine. Russian activities radically changed the security perception of European (especially Eastern European) countries and resulted in the suspension of cooperation between Russia and NATO. The Russian tactics of annexing Crimea and supporting the rebels in eastern Ukraine, called hybrid warfare by western countries and NATO, has been described as one of the greatest threats to the western world and the Alliance, not only in the present but also for the future.

The Wales Summit, convened in the middle of the ongoing crisis, emerged as the cornerstone of NATO's evolution in the face of the Russian actions. Heads of states agreed on the need to reassure Eastern European allies vis a vis the Russian threat, deploying troops in Eastern European countries in rotation, and agreed on the need to adapt the Alliance to counter present and

- 1 Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Threats: Neither Omnipotent Nor Unbeatable", *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, Elsevier, Summer 2010 p. 442.
- 2 Timothy McCulloh-Richard Johnson, "Hybrid Warfare", *JSOU Report*, 13-4, August 2013, www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA591803, p.3.

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future Russian hybrid warfare, which they described as “a wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures employed in a highly integrated design”. In this way, Russian hybrid warfare became a game changer for the security of the Alliance.

However, NATO officials used various definitions when describing Russian hybrid warfare, resulting from Russian strategies and activities based on ambiguity, deniability, and secrecy. Existing theoretical hybrid warfare definitions proved insufficient to describe the wide variety of Russia's military and non-military activities, as the Russian model created a new phase in the evolution of hybrid warfare theories.

Hybrid Warfare Theory

Dictionaries define “hybrid” as “a thing made by combining two different elements.” Based on that, it is expected that hybrid warfare should contain at least two different warfare types. However, the problem lies in the definition and content of warfare types. In particular, the operational elements of irregular warfare, and its blurry borders, increase the complexity in defining the components of hybrid warfare.³ This complexity can be seen even in official military publications.

Most analysts argue that hybrid warfare strategies have been used since ancient times. Peter R. Mansoor emphasizes that the historical pedigree of hybrid warfare goes back at least as far as the Peloponnesian War in the fifth century BC, using seven different conflicts as examples of hybrid war,⁴ while Timothy McCulloh dates it back to 66 A.D., arguing that during the Jewish rebellion a hybrid force of criminal bandits, regular soldiers, and unregulated fighters used hybrid war tactics against Vespasian's Roman Legions.⁵ They emphasized that most wars had a hybrid warfare aspect.

However, studies related to hybrid warfare have been relatively new. The US has been focused on hybrid threats and hybrid warfare since the September 11 attacks, arguing that adversaries of the US are expected to use hybrid warfare to confront the superior and unmatched US conventional military capabilities.⁶ Israel has been adapting its Armed Forces for hybrid threats based

3 For example, according to the US Irregular Warfare Joint Operation Concept (Version 1.0, 11 September 2007) there are 14 different activities and operations that can be conducted under IW. On the other hand, Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operation Concept (Version 2.0, 17 May 2010) defines only five activities or operations as IW. The latter document also acknowledges that discussion and debate continues regarding use of the terms “regular” and “irregular” warfare.

4 Williamson Murray - Peter R. Mansoor, *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, p.3.

5 Timothy McCulloh - Richard Johnson, *Ibid*, p.3.

6 For example, see 2002 The National Security Strategy of the US or 2005 National Defense Strategy of the US.

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on the lessons learned during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict. The UK also acknowledges the rise of hybrid threats, defining them as the combination of conventional, irregular and high-end asymmetric threats in the same time and space.⁷ All of these studies are based on the asymmetrical aspect of war.

The use of the term “hybrid warfare” is also new. As Hoffman points out⁸, credit for the first use of “hybrid warfare” can be given to Robert G. Walker, who defined it as “warfare that lies in the interstices between special and conventional warfare.” Walker argues that hybrid warfare possesses characteristics of both the special and conventional realms, and requires an extreme amount of flexibility in order to transition operationally and tactically between the special and conventional arenas.⁹ However, Walker’s definition, which covers only the intersection of conventional and irregular warfare, does not reflect the comprehensive nature hybrid warfare. Additionally, it does not match the meaning of the term “hybrid”.

Although not as widely accepted as hybrid warfare, the term “compound war” coined by Thomas Huber played an important role in defining the new type of warfare. Huber described compound warfare as the simultaneous use of regular or main force and an irregular or guerilla force against an enemy.¹⁰ However McCullah argues that compound war might be a precursor to our current understanding of hybrid warfare.¹¹ David Hoffman agrees with McCullah, stating that compound wars offered synergy and combination at the strategic level, but not complexity, fusion, and simultaneity.¹²

The September 11th attacks in the US played an important role in the evolution of hybrid warfare theories highlighting the change of character for the threat against the US. The 2005 National Defense Strategy stated that “an array of traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive capabilities and methods will threaten US interests”¹³ without using the term hybrid threat. The document clarified that “catastrophic capabilities” refers to WMD capabili-

- 7 İngiltere Savunma Bakanlığı Resmi İnternet Sayfası, “Strategic Trends Programme: Future Character of Conflict”, 02 February 2010, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/33685/FCOCReadactedFinalWeb.pdf
- 8 Frank G. Hoffman, “Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars”, *Potomac Institute for Policy Studies*, December 2007, http://www.potomacinstitute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf
- 9 Robert G. Walker, “Spec Fi: The U.S. Marine Corps and Special Operations”, Monterey, Ca; Naval Post-Graduate School, December 2008, (Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi)
- 10 Thomas M. Huber, *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot, Fort Leavenworth*, Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002, p.1.
- 11 Timothy McCulloh - Richard Johnson, *Ibid*, p.8.
- 12 Frank G. Hoffman, “Hybrid Warfare and Challenges”, *JFQ*, Issue 52, 1st Quarter, 2009, p.36.
- 13 According to the 2005 National Defense Strategy, catastrophic threats include acquisition, production and use of WMD while disruptive threats include breakthrough technologies to negate current US advantages in key operational domains.

ties while “disruptive capabilities” refers to the development and use of breakthrough technologies to negate US advantages in key operational domains.

The 2005 National Defense Strategy document also argued that the adversaries would acquire these capabilities to challenge the conventional warfare superiority of the US, underlining the asymmetric dimension of hybrid warfare. The Strategy mentioned Al Qaeda and North Korea as examples of adversaries that try to acquire different forms of warfare capabilities, accepting that both state and non-state actors can pursue hybrid warfare capabilities. Frank Hoffman’s argument that the greatest challenge for the US will not come from a state that selects one approach, but from states or groups that select from the whole menu of tactics and technologies to meet its own strategic culture and geography,¹⁴ played an important role in the evaluation of hybrid threat in the US.

The 2006 Lebanon War became a cornerstone for Israel with regard to hybrid warfare studies. The Israeli Forces, which had been focusing on highly technological conventional capabilities, suffered heavy losses against Hezbollah’s irregular tactics, which were later described as hybrid threat. According to David E. Johnson, Hezbollah practiced hybrid war as defined by Frank Hoffman during the Second Lebanon War by Israel in 2006, by fighting between low-intensity and high-intensity wars:¹⁵ William Murray and Peter R. Mansoor also underline how this war affected and changed Israeli Defense Forces’ intellectual understanding of warfare, leading them to retrain their active and reserve forces to fight on both conventional and irregular battlefields while learning to compete in the realm of information warfare.¹⁶ It is important to note that that hybrid warfare studies in the US and Israel has focused on the asymmetrical character of hybrid warfare.

Frank Hoffman played an important role for hybrid warfare theories. “The blend of the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervor of irregular warfare,” in Frank Hoffman’s description has been one of the commonly referenced definitions of hybrid warfare. Hoffman argues that “hybrid warfare incorporates a full range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder.”¹⁷ According to Hoffman, in most conflicts regular and irregular components occurred in different theaters and in distinctly different formations. In hybrid wars, these forces became blurred into the same force in the same battle space. While they are operationally integrated and tactically fused, the irregular component of

14 Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, p.27.

15 David E. Johnson, *Hard Fighting: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza*, Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2011, p.3.

16 Williamson Murray - Peter R. Mansoor, *Ibid*, p.15.

17 Frank G. Hoffman, “Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars”, p.8.

the force attempts to become operationally decisive rather than just protract the conflict, provoke overreactions and extend the cost of security for the defender.¹⁸

These four elements of Hofmann's definition have been widely accepted by other scholars and official documents, especially in the US. For example, the US Army's Field Manual 3.0: Operations, dated 2011, defined hybrid threats as the combination of regular, irregular, terrorist, and criminal groups who decentralize and syndicate against the US and who possess capabilities previously monopolized by nation states. On the other hand, it should be noted that according to the US publication "Irregular Warfare: Countering Irregular Threats Joint Operation Concept (Version 2.0, 17 May 2010)," irregular warfare includes terrorist and criminal group activities.

Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor accept this definition of irregular warfare, describing hybrid warfare as conflict involving a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorists), which could include both state and non-state actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose.¹⁹ John J. McCuen also underlines the role of regular and irregular warfare, addressing hybrid war as "a combination of symmetric and asymmetric war in which intervening forces conduct traditional military operations against enemy military forces and targets while they must simultaneously -- and more decisively -- attempt to achieve control of the combat zone's indigenous populations by securing and stabilizing them".²⁰ However, John Schroefl and Stuart A. Kaufman criticize these approaches arguing that they unwisely try to simplify the concept of hybridity, pointing to the example which is defined as a mixture of conventional and irregular warfare.²¹

All of these various definitions bolster the argument that there is no unique and comprehensive definition for hybrid warfare. The disparity between definitions results mainly from the case studies that officials or authors accept as the starting point. Another important factor is the blurred borders between different types of warfare, especially between irregular and unconventional warfare, as the secret and complex nature of these operations makes it harder for people to categorize activities correctly. Emerging technologies and related capabilities also contribute to the divergent definitions.

Russian hybrid warfare in Crimea supported this argument and there has been various definitions have been used by NATO officials, which are different than those used by scholars. Former Secretary General Anders F. Rasmussen

18 *Ibid*, p.29.

19 Williamson Murray - Peter R. Mansoor, *Ibid*, p.3.

20 John J. McCuen, "Hybrid Wars", *Military Review*, March-April 2008, p.108.

21 Joseph Schroefl - Stuart Kaufman, "Hybrid Actors, Tactical Variety: Rethinking Asymmetric and Hybrid War", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37:10, 2014, 867.

defined hybrid warfare as the “combination of covert military operations combined with sophisticated information and disinformation operations.”²² His successor, Stoltenberg, described it as warfare that combines the power of unconventional means such as cyber and information operations, and disguised military operations.²³ On the other hand, NATO's top military commander, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Philippe M. Breedlove told that he prefer using unconventional warfare instead of hybrid warfare.²⁴ Russia's wide range of overt and covert military activities, from conventional warfare to cyber-attacks, prevented NATO officials from formulating a consistent definition of Russia's hybrid warfare.

Russia And Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare is not new for Russia, nor did it start with the Ukrainian crisis. The Russians historically developed and applied successful hybrid warfare tactics, especially during the Chechnya and Georgia crisis. Lessons learned during the Color revolutions and Arab Spring also improved Russia's hybrid warfare capabilities. This can be seen in the article written by Valeriy Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, one of the most important sources for understanding Russian hybrid warfare in which he reveals Russia's view on modern warfare strategies, called “non-linear warfare”. The idea behind is that conventional geopolitical paradigms no longer hold. Russian view of modern warfare is focused on the policy that the main battlefield is not in the territorial lines, but in the minds.²⁵ In other words, new generation wars in Russian perspectives are regarded as a vital tool providing additional facilities to handle the battles in the ground. The main objectives of the Russian new-generation war perception is to reduce the necessity for conventional military power the ways in which opponents' remarkable part of military officials and population positioned in favor of the attacker.²⁶

Gerasimov argues that the very rules of war have changed, specifically referring to the Arap Spring. He defines change in the modern era as follows: “The focus of applied methods of conflict has altered in the direction of the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military measures applied in coordination with the protest potential of the

22 NATO Resmi İnternet Sayfası, Future NATO, Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at Chatham House - London, United Kingdom, 20 June 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_111132.htm

23 Stefan Grobe, “Stoltenberg: NATO massively stepping up military presence in Europe”, EURONEWS, 25.03.2015, <http://www.euronews.com/2015/03/25/stoltenberg-nato-massively-stepping-up-military-presence-in-europe/>

24 “Die Russen nutzen alle Werkzeuge”, Die Zeit, 29 January 2015.

25 Janis Berzins, Russian New Generation Warfare Is Not Hybrid Warfare, Ed. (in) Artis Pabriks and Andis Kudors, The War in Ukraine: Lessons for Europe, Konrad Adanauer Shiftung, The Centre For East European Policy Studies University of Latvia Press, Riga, 2015. p. 45

26 Ibid, p.45.

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population. All this is supplemented by military means of a concealed character, including carrying out actions of informational conflict and the actions of special operations forces. The open use of forces -- often under the guise of peacekeeping and crisis regulation -- is resorted to only at a certain stage, primarily for the achievement of final success in the conflict.”²⁷ In his view, “the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other non-military measures” all of this supplemented by the ignition of the local population as a next pillar through concealed armed forces.²⁸ Russia applied his so-called “non-linear warfare” strategies in Crimea, which western countries called hybrid warfare, that included a wide variety of capabilities such as conventional and irregular units, information warfare or cyber technologies.

Russian conventional capabilities, with huge amount of investment, played an important role for the success of their hybrid warfare strategies. As shown in the chart Russia’s military expenditure has been steadily increased. Particularly after Georgia, Crimea and Ukraine crisis, Russian conventional arm capacity has been used as a challenge towards Western European countries and its periphery. Moreover, with regard to increase in military expenditure, Russia demonstrated stubborn interest towards its strategic periphery. As shown in chart 2, Russia, by upgrading and empowering its conventional power despite its descending GDP and prioritizing the aggressive policy toward Crimea and Ukraine, drew a rocky road, but another important role for media.



Chart-1: Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database²⁹

27 Robert Coalson, “Top Russian General Lays Bare Putin’s Plan for Ukraine”, Huffington Post, 09 February 2014.

28 Sam Jones, “Ukraine: Russia’s New Art of War”, *Financial Times*, 28 August 28 2014, p.2.

29 http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database

Where is Russia going?

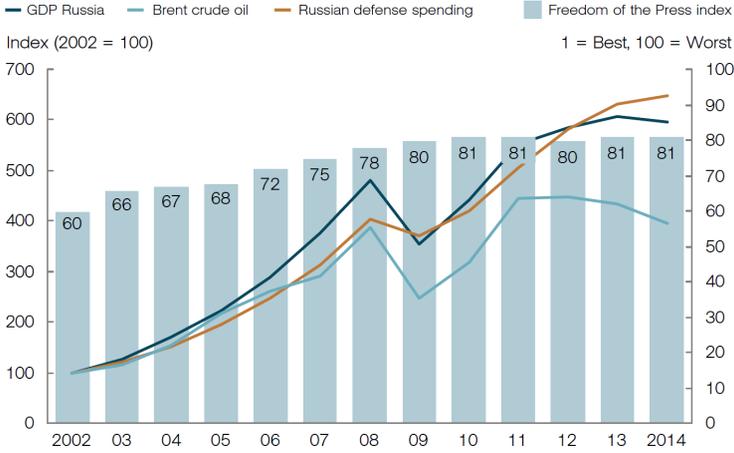


Chart-2 Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute; International Monetary Fund; US Energy Information Administration; Freedom House³⁰

Russia resorted to conventional strategies but preferred threatening Ukraine and the western world with conventional warfare instead of using mass conventional units to invade Ukraine or Crimea. Snap exercises became the main methodology to show the muscles of conventional capabilities. They started a snap exercise from 26 February to 3 March 2014 in the Central and Western District (on the Ukrainian border) with 150,000 troops. On 13 March, the Russian Defense Ministry announced another exercise near the Ukrainian border that include dropping 1,500 paratroopers into Rostov and deploying 8,500 pieces of artillery into the Belgorod area, along with rocket launchers, howitzers, anti-tank guns and other weapons³¹. They also conducted different scale navy, air, and ground troop exercises in different locations inside Russia, including the Kaliningrad region, during the crisis. Russian troops stayed on the Ukrainian border as the sword of Damocles until the annexation of Crimea was completed.

In addition to the exercises, Russia bolstered its activities in Crimea by using its conventional units, blocking harbors with warships, controlling military bases and airports, and establishing checkpoints to control access to Crimea. Russia used troops it kept inside Crimea before the invasion based on the base agreement with Ukraine (limited to 20,000) Protect on legal units inside Crimea was the main pretext. For example, on 28th of February, Russian Foreign Ministry stated that it had informed the Ukrainian government

³⁰ Munich Security Report 2015, p. 21.

³¹ "Russian troops gathering at Ukraine border for exercises as standoff continues", *Washington Post*, 14 March 2014.

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that armored units from the Black Sea Fleet base near Sevastopol had entered Crimea in order to protect fleet positions.³²

The most important evidence of use or threat for Russian conventional capabilities has been Putin's request to the Federation Council for permission to "use the armed forces of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine until the normalization of the socio-political situation in the that country". The unanimous vote to grant permission in a few hours highlighted the decisiveness of Russia. Putin's confession that they were ready to put Russia's nuclear forces on alert during the Crimea crisis³³ also reveals that Russia planned to use all available means to annex Crimea. However Putin has repeatedly stated that Russia did not use Russian Armed Forces even though it was conceivable.

Russia's activities in Crimea have been based mostly on irregular warfare, which is one of the main components of hybrid warfare. Irregular warfare is described in both JP 1, the Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the US, and JP 3-0, Joint Operations, as "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s)". According to the JP 3-05 'Special Operation' document, irregular warfare by Special Forces can be executed in two forms: supporting an insurgency or a resistance movement against a hostile nation state, or supporting a friendly nation state against insurgency, resistance, or terrorists. The former definition characterized Russian irregular warfare in Crimea.

Russia supported an insurgency -- a resistance movement against the legal Crimean government -- by armed men in military uniform without marks of identification, called "little green men" by SACEUR Breedlove. As Gerasimov noted that Russian military power would shift its military treatment strategy from direct destruction to direct influence.³⁴ In the first place, instead of initiating hard power instruments, the little green men have been the main actors in Crimea from the beginning, storming Parliament and official buildings, blocking roads and streets, establishing checkpoints, organizing pro-Russian populations, and controlling the Crimean peninsula. This policy derived from the old Soviet military strategy. Gerasimov quotes from a soviet military theoretician, Georgii Isserson, that "mobilization does not occur after a war declared, but unnoticed proceeds long before that"³⁵. This approach is a significant sign of usage of irregular warfare in Crimean case.

Another objective of Russia's irregular warfare also included regime change in Crimea. Supported by irregular forces, on 27 February, Pro-Russians

32 "Russia admits that it has moved troops in Ukraine", *The Telegraph*, 28 February 2014.

33 "Putin says Russia was ready for nuclear confrontation over Crimea", *Reuters*, 16 March 2015.

34 Valery Gerasimov, "New Challenges need to rethink the forms and methods of warfare", <http://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632>.

35 Grand Strategy: A View from Oregon, Hybrid Warfare, 7 October 2014 <https://geopoliticus.wordpress.com/tag/georgii-isserson/>

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forced the Crimean parliament to hold an emergency closed-door session that purposefully excluded Prime Minister Anatolii Mohylov and approved the election of pro-Russian Sergei Aksyonov as new president of Crimea although his party controlled only three seats in Parliament. The new government also decided to hold a referendum on joining Russia.

Use of proxies in new generation war in Russian insight gets greater importance. Where the state's survival is not at stake yet the increasing need of securing national interests can be achieved, some unofficial groups' proxy methods provides vital facilities for the attacker.³⁶ In Crimea case, troops with masks and without insignia strategy provided deniability for Russia. Putin denied at the early stage involvement of Russia's Special Forces, defining these groups as "self-defense forces". However, subsequent documents revealed that in February Putin ordered his National Security team, including the Head of Special Forces, to prepare plans to bring Crimea back into Russia.³⁷ Additionally Ukrainian government, allegedly endorsed by Obama, provided photos of the armed men without uniform participating in operations in Georgia in 2008 as well as Crimea in 2014.³⁸ Vladimir Putin finally admitted during an interview with journalists that Russian servicemen did back the Crimean self-defense forces and they acted in a civil but decisive and professional manner.³⁹

Terrorism is also an important component of hybrid warfare. According to European Security Strategy in 2003 five major threats considered as the most notable: terrorism, proliferation of WMDs, regional conflicts, state failure, and organized crime.⁴⁰ Moreover, US Joint Publication 3-26 "Counterterrorism" defines terrorism as the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political. Terrorism is not in and of itself an ideology or a form of war. Terrorism is a tactic used by organizations trying to achieve specific goals.

Russia resorted to terror tactics to suppress the pro-Ukraine population in Crimea. Pro-Maidan protests in Crimea, especially in Simferopol and Sevastopol, disappeared in one day because of threats and intimidation by the pro-Russian population and especially Russian irregular forces. Pressure, discouragement, threats, and killings resulted in the disappearance of pro-Ukrainian

36 Andrew Mumford, "Proxy Warfare and the Future of Conflict", *The RUSI Journal*, 158:2, 2013, p. 40.

37 Neil MacFarquhar, "Putin contradicts claims on annexation of Crimea", *The New York Times*, 09 March 2015.

38 "Photos link masked men in East Ukraine to Russia", *The New York Times*, 20 April 2014.

39 The Transcript of the Interview can be found in Kremlins's official web site: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20366>Vladimir Putin answered journalists' questions on the situation in Ukraine

40 "A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy", Brussels, 12 December 2003. p. 205.

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people from the streets. Crimean Tatars have been one of the main targets for the subversion. As Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko stated, several Tatars and pro-Russian activists have been murdered or simply disappeared. Many Tatar leaders have been barred from returning to their homeland.⁴¹

Another important tool of Russian hybrid war has been information warfare with massive use of high technology. NATO officials highlighted Russia's use of an information campaign, which has not been included in the definitions of hybrid warfare theorists. Former Secretary General Rasmussen described Russian activities as "sophisticated information and disinformation operations"⁴². SACEUR Breedlove defined Russia's information warfare campaign as "the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen in the history of information warfare."⁴³ NATO highlighted the importance of strategic communication to counter Russia's information and disinformation operations, stating in the Wales Summit Declaration that NATO will enhance strategic communication and welcome the establishment of the NATO-accredited Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Latvia.

Presence of Russian-Speaking minority as a source of legitimacy claim in Crimea and Ukraine operations have paved the way for Russian ascending influence inside the local.⁴⁴ As a legacy of the Russification policy throughout soviet and post-soviet times, Russia used Russian speaking population as a leverage so that it could base its operations for the sake of preserving its ethnic Russian population. As a matter of the fact that it has been an integral part of the Russian political agenda, particularly after breakup of the Soviet Union.⁴⁵ According to Munich Security Report 2015, %54 of Russian people are of the opinion that Russia have the right to annex territories of the former Soviet republics, and Russian people experiences right infringements or already discriminated outside the Russian Federation.⁴⁶

Emerging technologies, especially cyber technology, have contributed to the complexity of Russian hybrid warfare. In March 2014, Ukraine accused Russia of disrupting communications systems through cyber attacks as well as hacking news websites and defacing social media with propaganda messag-

41 Petro Poroshenko, "Crimea is still Ukraine", *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 March 2015.

42 NATO Resmi İnternet Sayfası, Speech by NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at Chatham House - London, United Kingdom, Future NATO, 19 July 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_111132.htm, 16.03.2015.

43 John Vandiver, "SACEUR: Allies must prepare for Russia 'hybrid war'", *Stars and Stripes*, 04 September 2014.

44 Andras Racz, "Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist", *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) Report 43*, p.80.

45 J. Hedenskog, - R.L. Larsson, "Russian Leverage on the CIS and the Baltic States", *Swedish Defence Research Agency*, June 2007, Stockholm, http://foi.se/ReportFiles/foir_2280.pdf, p.31.

46 Munich Security Report 2015, p. 21.

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es.⁴⁷ Russia also attacked the cyber systems of western countries and organizations, including NATO, as it did during the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. During the Crimea crisis, several cyber attacks were reported including intercepting a US drone system over Crimea.⁴⁸ Many cyber-attack incidents were reported in this period, carried out by groups linked to Russia. NATO officials often referred to the Russian cyber activities as well as to the urgent need for NATO cyber defense capabilities.

Russian hybrid warfare has included more than military activities. Especially the legal pretext for overt operations was one of the tools Russia used before and during the annexation. What is important in Russia's campaign in both in Ukraine and Crimea cases has been the idea of successful use of force in legitimacy. Military campaign against Ukraine and Crimea had found positive reflections for Russian interest in Ukraine and Crimea⁴⁹ Russia issued passports for Crimean to bolster their argument of "having the right to protect Russian citizens," just as they used this tactic during the 2008 Georgia war, issuing Russian passports to Georgians living in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This actually started right after the 2008 Russian-Georgian war, when the pro-western Ukraine government accused Russia of issuing passports in Sevastopol⁵⁰, and later in different places in Crimea. Last week of February 2014, just in the middle of the crisis in Crimea, a bill was introduced in the Russian State Duma to create a simplified procedure for "Russian-speaking citizens of the former USSR, irrespective of nationality, who are in danger of a real threat of ethno-cultural, political, or professional discrimination" to acquire Russian citizenship. It has been reported that the Russian consulate in Crimea has been offering expedited Russian citizenship to members of the disbanded Ukrainian special police force.⁵¹ Finally, a spokesman for Russia's Federal Migration Service stated that as of July 24, 2014, around 1.5 million people living in Crimea had already been given Russian passports.⁵²

The 16 March 2014 referendum in Crimea to join Russia was another legal pretext of Russia's hybrid warfare. According to the referendum results, which was held on 16 March, Crimean supported joining Russia with 96.77% of the vote with an 83.1% voter turnout. International organizations such as the EU and OSCE and western countries tried to declare the referendum invalid

47 Dave Lee, "Russia and Ukraine in cyber 'stand-off'", *BBC*, 05 March 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-26447200>

48 Isaac R. Porsche, "Cyberwarfare Goes Wireless", *US News*, 04 April 2014, <http://www.us-news.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2014/04/04/russia-hacks-a-us-drone-in-crimea-as-cyberwarfare-has-gone-wireless>

49 Janis Berzins, p. 43.

50 Adrian Blomfield, "Russia 'distributing passports in the Crimea'", *The Telegraph*, 17 August 2008.

51 Eric Lohr, "What can passports tell us about Putin's intentions?", *The Washington Post*, 04 March 2014.

52 "Some 1.5 million Russian passports issued in Crimea", *Kyiv Post*, 24 July 2014.

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with a UN resolution which Russia vetoed. Russia used this referendum result, despite its achievement under pressure by irregular troops and pro-Russian protestors including Sergey Aksyonov's armed men, as a legal instrument to achieve annexation. Russia also used the referendum as the legal argument on every occasion, as Putin described in his speech to Russian policymakers that the people of Crimea clearly and convincingly expressed their will and stated that they want to be with Russia⁵³.

Conclusion

The western world, and in particular NATO officials, agree that Russia resorted to hybrid warfare in Crimea as well as in Ukraine, as explicitly mentioned in the Wales Summit Declaration. The problem lies in describing Russian activities within the existing hybrid warfare theories resulted in various different definitions by officials. The confusion derived largely from lack of consensus on the definition of hybrid warfare, as well from distinctive features of Russian activities, based as they are largely in complexity, ambiguity, and secrecy. In this way, the Russian case presented a new and important example in the study of modern hybrid warfare.

Most importantly, the Russian example changed the common belief that weaker opponents, especially non-state actors, resort to hybrid warfare strategies in order to challenge stronger countries, especially those with robust conventional capabilities. Thus Russian hybrid warfare differs greatly from the hybrid warfare concept defined in the west, especially by the US or Israel as a threat against their conventional superiority. In addition to the change in asymmetry, Russian irregular warfare strategies deploying uniformed soldiers without insignia challenged the heretofore assumed major purpose of hybrid warfare, namely to counter the conventional superiority of the stronger side in the conflict. Rather, Russia resorted to irregular warfare in order to ensure disguise, deception, and deniability, as well as the surprise effect if would work on Ukraine as well as the West.

The Russian example also opened a new chapter in the use of conventional forces in hybrid warfare. Russia massed large conventional forces on the border of Ukraine with support of simultaneous snap exercises in different parts of Russia, without actually resorting to invasion with massive units. This tactic played an important role in the intimidation and coercion of Ukraine and deterrence against direct interference by the western world. It further caused Ukraine and the West to shift their focus from Crimea to the Ukrainian borders.

The West, especially NATO, have largely cited cyber activities and information campaigns involving high technology as the prime aspects of Russian

53 Address by President of the Russian Federation, 18 March 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>

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hybrid warfare, even though these two activities played but complementary roles in Russia's success, rather than primary roles as in irregular warfare. That highlighted the correlation between emerging technologies and hybrid warfare, as well as the importance of using all available tools for success simultaneously and in a coordinated way.

Finally, one of the most important aspects of Russian hybrid warfare has been its focus on non-military measures to force Ukraine to accept their conditions. Russian non-military activities such as economic pressure (especially cutting off the energy supply), issuing passports to Crimeans, holding a referendum, and vetoing UN resolutions, underlined the civilian dimension of the concept of hybrid warfare.

In sum, Russia's hybrid warfare in annexing Crimea presented an intriguing case study for hybrid warfare theorists since Russia's example has achieved distinctive results that are unprecedented in several ways. The existing theoretical framework, with its lack of consensus in defining hybrid warfare, fails to adequately describe Russian activities.

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